

NEIL C. PARROTT, P.E.
Legislative District 2B
Washington County

Judiciary Committee



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February 1, 2012

Dr. Wallace D. Loh, President
University of Maryland
1101 Main Administration Building
College Park, MD 20742-6105

Dear Dr. Loh,

I am writing to you as a Maryland State Delegate, as an alumni of the University of Maryland at College Park, as a student who was involved with Maryland Swimming, and as a concerned citizen, to address the proposed elimination of the men's and women's swimming and diving teams as well as the school's women's water polo team. The teams are being cut due to budget problems within the athletic department.

People have written me with pleas that I contact you with their and my concerns about these sports programs being eliminated. These cuts simply do not make sense given the heavy investment into the swimming program at the University of Maryland at College Park.

The Campus Recreation Center Natatorium in the Eppley Recreation Center was built in 1998 and is a one-of-a-kind facility. The facility is one of the best swimming complexes in the entire United States built and designed to support competitive swimming, diving, and water polo programs. Whether or not the water sports programs are eliminated, the costs to operate and maintain the natatorium remain.

It is my understanding that Campus Recreation charges the Athletic Department \$290,000 per year to rent the facility. Without the revenue going into the Campus Recreation Department from the water sports programs, Campus Recreation will have to raise those funds on their own. Simply shifting expenses from one pot of money to another while eliminating important sports programs does not make sense for Marylanders.

I could understand cutting non-revenue sports if the teams were spending money renting an outside facility, but the University of Maryland owns the facility. If the Athletic Department were to cut the swim teams, it's true they would be saving the money in rent paid to Campus Recreation Center. However, since the campus would be losing \$290,000 a year, the costs of keeping up the facility would fall to the rest of the students with an increase in their student fees.

As I'm sure you are aware, there is a major fundraising effort underway to try to maintain these important water sports. The amount they have been asked to raise is \$11.5 million to sustain the team for eight years. This amount charges the fundraising effort with the cost of maintaining and operating the Campus Recreation Center Natatorium in the Eppley Recreation Center, which is a cost the University will pay whether or not the aquatic programs are active or not.

As a result of this fixed cost for the University, I believe it is fundamentally unfair and ingenuous to ask the fundraising effort to pay for this cost. I respectfully ask that the total amount that needs to be raised be reduced by the rent of the facility. This would result in a new fundraising goal of \$9.2 million instead of the \$11.5 million provided the facts I have been told are correct. This is still a monumental fundraising effort, but at least doesn't charge the aquatic teams with a cost the University would bear even without the teams.

In addition, I understand that the University plans to fully fund athletic students' scholarships whether or not the swim team continues using private funding. This also should not be the responsibility of the private fund. I request that the remainder of the four-year scholarships also be subtracted from the amount that needs to be raised. By my estimates, this would be approximately a \$900,000 cost and would result in a fundraising goal of \$8.3 million.

While I would prefer that the aquatic programs continue to be funded by the University without a fundraising effort, this proposal will at least provide an honest cost for the aquatic teams should they be self-sustaining.

Thank you for your consideration of this request to reduce the total amount that needs to be raised for the men's and women's swimming and diving programs from \$11.5 million to approximately \$8.3 million, depending on the scholarship savings. I look forward to reviewing your response. If you would like to reach me, please contact me by email at neil.parrott@house.state.md.us or by phone at (240) 329-0293.

Sincerely,

Neil C. Parrott
Delegate, Washington County

Cc: Dr. William E. Kirwan, USM Chancellor
Kevin Anderson, Athletic Director
Dr. Linda M. Clement, Vice President for Student Affairs